



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA PROHIBITS CUT FLOWERS FROM NEW ZEALAND TO PROTECT AGAINST THE LIGHT BROWN APPLE MOTH

WASHINGTON, Sept. 24, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) suspended the importation of cut flowers and greenery from New Zealand due to recent interceptions of light brown apple moth (LBAM) in shipments at U.S. ports of entry.

"Invasive pests like light brown apple moth pose a constant threat to U.S. agriculture and the environment--costing the United States millions to control and eradicate each year," said Bruce Knight, under secretary for USDA's marketing and regulatory programs. "Shutting down this pathway is a significant step towards protecting our natural resources from this devastating pest."

Effective Sept. 12, cut flowers and greenery from New Zealand grown outside of certified greenhouses or screen houses will not be allowed into the United States until an APHIS-approved protocol is in place to ensure the flowers are free of LBAM. This protocol would also require a phytosanitary certificate stating that the flowers were grown in certified greenhouses and inspected and found free of LBAM.

"We are working aggressively to stop the introduction and spread of the light brown apple moth in the United States," said Knight. "USDA constantly evaluates potential pathways and takes swift action should invasive pests be detected."

LBAM is a native pest of Australia and is now widely distributed throughout New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Ireland and New Caledonia. It targets nearly 2000 kinds of plants and trees, including oak trees, roses and strawberries. LBAM could easily spread throughout the United States if it becomes established here because it has relatively few natural enemies and reproduces quickly. This pest threatens agricultural and nursery production in America, as well as native plant species and the ecosystems they support. The first LBAM detection on the United States mainland occurred in March 2007 in Alameda County, Calif. Since then, it has been identified in 11 additional counties within California.

USDA and the California Department of Food and Agriculture are working together to eradicate this pest from California and stop its spread to other parts of the United States.

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